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# NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL

## Monterey, California



# THESIS

THE IMPACT OF SOVIET ETHNICITY AND  
DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGES  
ON SOVIET FOREIGN POLICY

by

Patricia Weathers Wyatt

March 1984

Thesis Advisor:

Stephen Jurika

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The Impact of Soviet Ethnicity and Demographic Changes  
on Soviet Foreign Policy

by

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS IN NATIONAL SECURITY AFFAIRS

from the

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March 1984

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis examines Soviet ethnic and national problems resulting from the gradual demographic shifts presently underway. It considers the impact of the shift from a Russian majority in a Russian dominated society, to the Russians becoming only one large minority group among many. The tensions that will increasingly strain the Soviet system as a result of the demographic changes and the complex problems with which the new Kremlin leadership must deal are discussed in relation to Soviet foreign policy. A major problem of the coming decades will be how the leadership attempts to resolve these changes. The nationality problems of the Soviet Union may not intrinsically be momentous, but are crucial for their potentially exacerbating effects on Soviet foreign policy.





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## I. INTRODUCTION

The USSR is a multi-ethnic, multi-national society, consisting of over 100 distinct ethnic and linguistic groups. Claiming that any "nationalities" problem has been solved, the Soviet Union "offers itself as a model for multi-ethnic societies of the developing world." [Ref. 1: p. 1] Contrary to this view, this thesis will examine Soviet domestic ethnic problems and the challenge of a growing imbalance in the demographic structure of the Soviet Union. In doing so, the impact of ethnic nationalism and the demographic shifts on Soviet foreign policy will be considered. If Soviet international behavior is constrained by its domestic system, which may in turn be influenced by the national character of the USSR, then the potential impact of ethnic problems on Soviet foreign policy must be considered.

Soviet foreign policy is the result of a complicated mixture of diverse and frequently contradictory elements. Any study of Soviet foreign policy is hampered by the tradition of Russian xenophobia and general suspiciousness of the West. Secrecy is inherent in Soviet decisionmaking. "There has been little (public Soviet) effort even to explain and analyze ex post facto political situations and Soviet responses in factual terms..." [Ref. 2: p. 2] Much





of Western writing about influences on Soviet foreign policy decisionmaking is mere speculation. Though many careful analyses exist, these are limited by an outsider's viewpoint. Though Soviet decisions are not formulated in a vacuum, "the well-spring of Kremlin policy remains as much a riddle as ever." [Ref.3: p. 282]

These difficulties in analyzing Soviet foreign policy tend to overshadow what can be deduced and even confirmed. The Soviet capability to pursue a given course of action is constrained by both external and internal factors. Because the Soviet Union is part of an international community of nations, the nature of the international system at any given time must be considered as an input to Soviet foreign policy. A further constraint comes from internal factors such as geographic setting, military strength, economic base and population. While Soviet control over external factors may be minimal, Rosser notes that they have much "more latitude in manipulating the internal factors affecting their national capability". [Ref. 4: p. 9] It must be noted that no single factor can adequately explain Soviet foreign policy. There is an interdependency among domestic and foreign politics which, in turn, affects strategic foreign policy. Of this interplay, Soviet ethnic and religious problems are only contributory factors.

One of the less studied internal factors affecting Soviet national capabilities is their nationality problem,



an old-fashioned term used in the Soviet Union for the phenomena of ethnicity. There is growing Western awareness and understanding of Soviet multi-ethnicity and its implications. While there is some disagreement over its potential severity, Western analysts have noted that Soviet ethnic problems revolve around the unique status of the USSR as "the world's last surviving nineteenth-century style empire." [Ref. 5: p. 156] Or, as Richard Pipes notes, the "Soviet Union today is in effect an empire run like a nationally homogeneous state, suffering all the consequences of this contradiction." [Ref. 6: p. 5] This vast empire is incredibly diverse, stretching across eleven time zones and covering one-sixth of the earth's land mass, with an extraordinary variety of languages, religions and ethnic groups. While, at present, the Russians account for slightly over half the country's population, minority groups range from tens of millions to several thousands. Yet, "Russians dominate the upper echelons of industry, the government, the Party, and the military, scientific, and educational establishments." [Ref. 5: p. 157]

Today the Soviet Union is undergoing an historic and profound shift in population dynamics. While demographic changes take decades to become firmly established, the gradually changing ratio of Russian majority to non-Russian minority has been seen coming, and dreaded, for years. This thesis will examine some of the varied impacts of this



demographic shift from majority to minority, particularly in the areas of emergent nationality problems and their impact on Soviet foreign policy.

The Soviet national question has been the focus of interest since the October revolution. Its changing character over the past six decades will be discussed below. However, as a national problem it can be seen on two levels. The first level is the discrimination against national languages, cultures and religious groups, while the second level comprises the Russian domination of cultural and political life in the Soviet Union. Ironically, the result of years of ethnically related policies has been to reinforce and perpetuate ethnic minorities. This phenomenon, combined with the demographic shifts favoring certain minority groups, particularly the non-European Central Asian peoples, has markedly increased the number of controversial questions/problems with which the Soviet leadership must deal. These will have some affect on almost every aspect of Soviet life--military, economic and political.

It may be, however, that Soviet ethnicity is only one aspect of the strident politicization of ethnic identity sweeping across the globe. Ethnonationalism, or politicized ethnicity, is an area of increasing interest to scholars. Melvin Croan argues that ethnonationalism "has become a crucial factor in the domestic affairs of multi-ethnic





societies and a major disruptive force in contemporary international relations." [Ref. 7: p. 71] This idea will be considered throughout the thesis. Nationalism and the impact of ethnicity on the USSR today is far more than the sum of its parts. The difficulty of working with the subject is compounded by its depths and the intangibilities of nationalism.



## II. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

### A. INTRODUCTION

The Soviets are heirs to an empire built by Russian czars; even after sixty-seven years, this empire remains not only relatively intact in terms of territory but also has been enlarged. This imperial aspect underlies much of the contemporary nationality problem. Many of the numerous subject nations and areas of Czarist Russia were once independent countries and most of them had strong cultural and religious traditions. As a result Czarist Russia was rarely seen as an integrated whole, and it was generally governed by administrative measures rather than through general laws. [Ref. 8: p. 4] With so many diverse elements, an overlap between domestic and foreign affairs was unavoidable. Writing on the imperial dimensions of the Czarist government, S. Starr notes that a "prime reason for this interpenetration of imperial and foreign policies was in the fact that often political and ethnic boundaries do not coincide." [Ref. 8: p. 6]

This heritage causes, in part, the inherent difficulties in domestic politics. Are policies to be applied only to specific geographic regions, as opposed to a single law throughout the empire? The Russians, like their Soviet heirs, were dealing with Europeans and non-Europeans, forest



and steppe folk, northerners and southerners, Christians and Muslims, nomads, city dwellers and peasants. Nationality for each region of the empire was frequently a matter of social class. Landowners and rulers were often Russian (or Slavic); the middle class, what there was of it, was largely Jewish (especially in the Western part of Russia), while the peasants were nationals.

#### 8. YEARS OF REVOLUTION

In her comprehensive work on the decline of the Soviet empire, Helene Carrere d'Encausse argues that at "the start of the twentieth century the empire was already showing signs of weakness; all its subject peoples were beginning to resent its domination and looking for ways to escape from it." [Ref. 9: p. 13] Lenin opened the "prison of the peoples" by appealing to and exploiting the various nationalities' desire for freedom, "Oppressed peoples, rise up!" The Czar's empire, already badly damaged by World War I, collapsed under the combined forces of revolution, war losses and nationalism. Several national communities, including Armenians, Georgians and Ukrainians, broke away during the course of the revolution and declared their independence. However, as Meyer notes "in the name of proletarian unity, the new Red Army reconquered most of the breakaway nations." [Ref. 5: p. 156] This was in spite of initial promises of political self-determination, evidence





of Soviet contempt for those promises. A Library of Congress report, strongly biased towards the U.S., argues that "Soviet attitudes toward the national question have been based solely upon political expediency with a short-range objective of establishing uncontested authority of the centralized Soviet State and ultimately of merging the nationalities into a single unit of Soviet power based on Russian communist norms." [Ref. 10: p. 20]

Having painfully established his rule, Lenin made a number of decisions regarding the nationalities problem. He believed that in the long run communism would win over nationalism, disagreeing with many of his fellow Bolsheviks, including Stalin. To Lenin, the fundamental aim of socialism was "not only to abolish the division of mankind into small states and to remove all national isolation, not only to bring nations closer together, but also to merge them." [Ref. 10: p. 20] Yet, Lenin argued that the state should "not permit the overriding of any one nationality by another." [Ref. 10: p. 160] Education was seen as the means to the new Soviet Man--a multinational species--so literacy in native tongues was endorsed. Meyer concludes that "Lenin miscalculated. His policy did not lead to a Soviet Man; instead, it triggered a renaissance of national cultures throughout the Soviet Union." [Ref. 5: p. 156] Nathan Glazer, quoted by M. Croan, makes the point that "successive generations of Soviet communist leaders have



suffered from the very same distorted view, i.e., an underestimation of the appeal of nationalism." [Ref. 7: p. 74] This is why, over the long run, a nation of Soviet Men has failed to appear.

### C. POST-REVOLUTION CONSOLIDATION

The post-revolution goal was to transform a heterogeneous group of nations into a viable, governable state. Treaties were signed among the Soviet republics which established close economic and military ties, but in essence resulted in Russia becoming "primus inter pares". Stalin became the expert on the nationalities problems. He proposed a Soviet federation modeled on the RSFSR (Federated Republic of Russia) which Carrere comments was "characterized by a high degree of centralization and an almost total lack of local jurisdictional authority." [Ref. 9: p. 19]

The result was the creation of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics as a federation of fifteen nominally independent units (Soviet Socialist Republics or SSR's), each officially the homeland of one of the largest nationalities. "Smaller ethnic groups, and some of the larger groups with homelands in their interior (where even nominal independence would be an obvious fiction), are represented by the next-lower level nationality-based unit in the political-administrative hierarchy, the Autonomous



Soviet Socialist Republics (or ASSR's)." [Ref. 11: p. 4] There are even smaller divisions, "Autonomous Oblasts" and "National Okrugs" for some of the smallest nationalities. According to Ralph Clem, "egalitarian ideology was affirmed by constitutional law." [Ref. 11: p. 24] Soviet internal organization reflects the immense and complex ethnic diversity of that country.

By the 1930's, the USSR was plunged deeply into the changes caused by the purges, collectivization, and Stalin's goal of eradicating national peculiarities. Stalin's power base was the lower echelon Russian party members who were adamantly pro-Russian and would not tolerate concessions to aliens (i.e., non-Russians). World War II somewhat altered this perspective. "The war years seemed to re-create nationalistic tensions like those which had led to the break-up of the Empire, despite nearly a quarter century's socialist training and federalism." [Ref. 9: p. 39] Stalin drew several lessons from the war. One, in particular, was the vulnerability of the borderlands. In a country of "exacerbated nationalisms he would completely renounce pre-war egalitarianism, establish levels of priority for local national sentiments, and raise the Russian nation to the top rank, exalting its traditions and culture." [Ref. 9: p. 33]





#### D. CONTEMPORARY SOVIET UNION

Territorially, the Soviet Union is the aggregate of its Czarist precedents, Leninist idealism about nation-states, military strategy for buffer zones, and the expedients of economy necessary to build the Soviet society. These combined to form an ethnic-geographic mosaic with the dominant Russians a salient feature relative to the outlying non-Russians. As a rule, non-Russians live in a great arc stretching from the Baltic Sea through Eastern Europe, across the northern parts of the Caucasus and Central Asia into Siberia. This is virtually an uninterrupted, non-Russian-majority populated, peripheral borderland with obvious strategic and geopolitical implications.

[The centrality of Russia is offset by the spatial distribution and concentration of the various nationalities in their respective homelands.] The majority of most Soviet ethnic groups still live in their homelands or in contiguous regions. In an article focusing on the national problem, Teresa Rakowska-Harmstone comments that the "Russians are the most significant exception, and the eastward shift of the Soviet population since 1917 occurred largely because of the geographic mobility of the Russian groups who now dominate the urban and industrial centers throughout the country." [Ref. 12: p. 76]

[A basic assumption underlying the Soviet approach to their nationality problem is that it has been solved; its





resolution was, and could have been, reached only through socialism. "All that now remains is the refinement of the solution by assisting and manipulating those internal forces that will bring about further rapprochement of nations and ultimately fusion." [Ref. 10: p. 36] This is the logical result of Stalin's goal of a common culture with a "common form and content", that is, communism fusing all the diverse peoples of the USSR. Complete national unity continues to be a viable goal. Such key words as "consolidation", "association", "friendship", "drawing together", and "complete unity" are mere variation of the common culture of communism to be shared by all Soviets.

A qualification must be recorded. Many believe that the centralized nature of the communist regime leaves little or no autonomy in the various republics. No matter why the federal ethnoterritorial state structure was established, it is nonetheless a part of the Soviet system. Clem notes that the various ethnic groups "(1) see the federal structure as long term if not permanent; (2) assign importance to it; (3) will resist attempts to downgrade it; and, (4) are now making demands on the regime through the formal ethnoterritorial medium." [Ref. 11: p. 13] Ethnicity is a base for interest group demands on both the the party and the state. According to Rakowska-Harmstone, "in the absence of institutionalized channels for interest articulation, the republics are the focus for the aggregation of local



interests in all spheres of social life; when articulated by local spokesmen, these invariably acquire ethnic overtones." [Ref. 12: p. 81] One aim of ethnic self-assertion is to gain the maximum autonomy which constitutionally belongs to the republics.



### III. POPULATION STATISTICS AND A BRIEF DEMOGRAPHIC STUDY OF CONTEMPORARY SOVIET UNION

#### A. INTRODUCTION

One of the most fascinating and potentially explosive aspects of Soviet demographic behavior is the wide variation in growth rates of ethnic groups. Here the future contrasts sharply with the past. The Russians have long been the dominant nationality both politically and in sheer numbers. Yet, a growing imbalance between European and non-European elements of the population may have long term effects. At the Twenty-fifth Congress of the CPSU, Brezhnev commented that "Problems of the environment and of population, which have grown more acute of late, must not escape the attention of Soviet scholars." [Ref. 13: p. 54], One such Soviet scholar wrote that "in the contemporary world, population problems, which have a significant influence on the rates of socioeconomic development of various countries are increasingly attracting the attention of the world public." [Ref. 13: p. 54]

Broadly speaking, the nationalities of the European USSR (the Baltic peoples, the Belorussians, the Ukrainians, and--most importantly--the Russians) are characterized by low rates of growth. The ethnic groups of Central Asia (Uzbeks, Tadzhiks, Kirgiz, Turkmens, and Kazakhs) and certain ethnic groups of the Caucasus regions are increasing in numbers at a phenomenal rate. Most of the nationalities of the Volga-Urals area (Komi, Udmurts, Chuvash, Mordvinians, Tatars, and Bashkins) and two of the largest Caucasian groups (Armenians and Georgians) are intermediate in population growth rates. [Ref. 11: p. 14]



A special problem encountered in researching Soviet demography is the wide variance among the sources in the terminology of Soviet peoples. The references range from a European-non-European dichotomy, to Slavic and non-Slavic, Central Asians and by implication, everyone else. For this thesis, the European-non-European distinction has been chosen except when a specific group is referred to, or in direct quotes. European includes the nationalities of the European USSR noted above, while non-European encompasses the peoples of Central Asia. Nationalities of the Volga-Urals and Caucasus regions will be included only when appropriate. The underlying assumption of most sources, when writing of the demographic imbalances, is the growing imbalance between the Russians and the Central Asians.

## B. CENSUS RESULTS AND INTERPRETATIONS

The Soviet Union has conducted three censuses since World War II--in 1959, 1970, and 1979. While much data was officially published by the USSR on the first two, only scanty information has been forthcoming on the 1979 census, leaving a very incomplete picture. However, from all available sources, Murray Feshbach, a noted U.S. demographer specializing in the Soviet Union, has drawn four conclusions which will be discussed in more detail below. The first is that there is a striking difference in the rates of population growth among the different national groups.





Second, there is a marked failure of the Soviet male population (particularly in the Slavic regions) to regain its demographically normal post-war share of the population. Third, there is an uneven geographic distribution of the youngest (0-9 years) members of the population. And, fourth, the overall population is aging.

In the 1979 census Russians comprised about 52 percent of the total Soviet population. By the year 2000 it is projected that they will account for only about 47 percent and many of them will be old. The growing Asian groups will comprise over 20 percent of the population. "By the year 2000 about 40 percent of all persons turning 18 in the Soviet Union will be of Muslim origin." [Ref. 14: p. 28]

The first of Feshbach's conclusions was that there is a growing differential in the rates of population growth among the various ethnic groups. The Soviet population is the world's third largest, at over 270 million people, following China and India. But its annual growth rate has declined from 1.8 percent a year in the 1950's to only 0.8 percent in 1980. [Ref. 15: p. 61] The tables at the end of this chapter illustrate the population size, average annual growth rates, and percentage of total Soviet population for most of the major Soviet nationality groups. These figures on rates of growth reflect natural increase (the excess of live births over deaths), assimilation and migration. It should be noted that some persons call themselves Russian



for census and passport purposes when normally they would be considered members of another group, thus further skewing the percentages. "Fassing" as Russian can give non-Russians certain advantages over registering as members of other ethnic groups.

In attempting to explain the wide disparity and diversity in growth rates among the national groups, the most likely explanations are found in the differential trends of fertility and mortality. Among developing nations fertility tends to be high -- a population explosion caused in part by better diet and medical care, and residual rural pro-family values. In many respects the Central Asian groups can be considered developing countries. The rural Muslims have a low mortality rate while their fertility rate ranges up to 5.8 births per woman. The Russian rate has fallen below the 2.1 births per woman replacement level. [Ref. 15: p. 62] This lower population growth is typical of modern industrial and urbanized societies.

Carrere comments that the "USSR having desperately sought to become an industrial society, it comes as no surprise that in interpreting modernization in terms of urbanization and the rejection of rural life the Soviet Union is losing the family values that country living had succeeded in preserving for a time, and it pays the price for this demographically." [Ref. 9: p. 84] Further, urban living conditions strongly inhibit tendencies towards large



families. Crowded and sub-standard living conditions, long waits for apartments for newlyweds caused by chronic housing shortages, poor day-care facilities for young children, and difficulties in obtaining adequate food supplies, including milk for children, combine to provide disincentives for having large families.

In contrast, Muslims have remained an essentially rural people. Most Muslim women do not work in industrialized areas but on farms. Muslim young women envision large ideal families, while their European counterparts frequently have four or five abortions. [Ref. 14: p. 28] Shevardnadze, head of the Georgian Republic, recently revealed a serious abortion problem in his republic at a meeting of top local party, economic and scientific officials. At a minimum, the number of official (i.e., registered) abortions exceeded the number of births by 10,000 in one year. Shevardnadze suggested that the actual gap may be even wider because of the increasing practice of private, unregistered abortions. [Ref. 16: p. 6] This suggestion is even more significant when balanced against the abortion/live birth situation in Georgia, which may perhaps be better than that of the USSR as a whole.

Compounding the lower birth rates are rising death rates, about 10.3 deaths per 1000 people, higher than in the 1950s. The U.S. rate is 8.8 per 1000. Part of this is the result of rising infant mortality (40 deaths per 1000 births





-- triple the U.S. figure) blamed on influenza epidemics, contaminated baby formulas, and alcoholism among expectant mothers. The alcoholism problem among the population as a whole is also a major cause of premature death. This increase in mortality in a nation at peace (excepting Afghanistan, of course) is unique in modern developed countries.

The problem of alcoholism leads to the second conclusion drawn by Feshbach -- that of a shortage of males in the European areas. By 1979, for the most part, there should have been a demographic recovery from the tremendous male losses sustained in World War II. While the European areas continue to indicate shortages, the Muslim-non-European areas are near normal distribution. Life expectancy has dropped for European males and a major factor contributing to this is alcoholism.

The death rates for males between 20 and 44 have increased dramatically. In 1965 the life expectancy of a Soviet male was 66 years, dropping to 64 by 1971, and an estimated 62 today. The death rates for males of that age group are three to three and a half times as high as for females in the same cohort. A major contributory factor is alcoholism and its associated ravages of the human body, including coronary disease. Feshbach notes a forthcoming study by Vladimir Tremi, Alcohol in the USSR: A Statistical Study that presents evidence of widespread poisoning from





defective alcohol, leading to at least 40,000 deaths in 1976 alone. These deaths were largely among adult males. In 1981 A. Volkov, the head of the Soviet Department of Demography of the Central Statistical Administration revealed that "...premature deaths of males exceeded divorces as a reason why women became heads of households." [Ref. 17: p. 32]

Vladimir Tremi, writing in Soviet Studies, noted that the rate of death from alcohol poisoning reflects the state of "a country's health and medical services and the general socio-economic environment." [Ref. 18: p. 497] The already high cost of alcohol was further raised by 20 percent in 1981, probably forcing heavy drinkers to increase their consumption of "samagon" or industrial alcohol and various surrogates, thus leading to more cases of poisoning. Tremi reasoned that "it is possible to imagine that the authorities concluded that the alcoholics most likely to succumb to alcohol poisoning...are already beyond saving and nothing but a burden on society." [Ref. 18: p. 499] An attitude of official "benign neglect" of the problem indicates Soviet disinterest.

The third conclusion was on the skewed distribution of the population aged 0 to 9 years. This distribution of live births is perhaps the most significant, yet indirect, evidence of the regional imbalances in population. While most information on the Soviet census was gleaned from



Soviet general news media, Feshbach notes that "the need to resort to indirect calculations (on this distribution) stems from a remarkable Soviet silence regarding such census data." [Ref. 17: p. 32] In 1979 the 0-9 years age cohorts comprised about 14-16 percent of the Baltic and Slavic populations, but an overwhelming 29-39 percent of the population in Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Tadzhikistan. This indication of continued high fertility in the Muslim republics has long range significance. Godfrey Baldwin of the Foreign Demographic Analysis Division of the U.S. Bureau of the Census has estimated that by the year 2000, "the youngest cohorts of the six Muslim republics will total some 85 percent of the total for cohorts of the same 0-9 years of age in the RSFSR. These youngsters in turn will be the progenitors of the USSR's population in the next century, of the future labor force and military manpower in the USSR." [Ref. 17: p. 33]

The final demographic conclusion isolated by Feshbach concerns the overall aging of the population. As with most industrial societies, the average age of the population is creeping upwards. In 1975 it was 28.7 years, and is expected to reach 33.1 by the year 2000. This dramatically increases the number of eligible pensioners (males over 60 and females over 55), while further affecting the nation's fertility potential. Where the birth rate has remained high (in the Muslim areas) the percentage of old in the



population is actually dropping. An aging population also affects the labor force, with increasing numbers of the new recruits coming from Muslim areas.

### C. IMPACT AND RESPONSE

The Soviets are clearly aware of the problems they face. How they handle them over the next decades may have a large impact on their stability as a nation dominated by Russians. Of course, dealing with and projecting from demographic data is a waffling proposition. Carrere emphasizes this when she related the story of the great Russian scientist Mendelyev who predicted in 1900 that by 2050 his country's population would stand at 300 million. [Ref. 9: p. 88] Mendelyev had based his prediction on the fact that the population of Czarist Russia had doubled in forty years.

Despite claims that their "nationality" problem has been solved, recent Soviet actions have actually aggravated the nationality question. Boris Meissner writes that non-Russian nationalities have been adversely affected by Soviet (i.e., Russian) policies in a number of ways. Though the leaders speak of "internationalism" and a "single Soviet people" they actually have intensified their policy of Russification. Many schools of higher learning now are "encouraged" to use Russian. Russian is given official status as a second national language in Belorussia, Moldavia and Kazakh. [Ref. 19: p. 20]



Meissner comments that "Soviet policies have had a particularly adverse impact on those nationality groups not settled on a compact territorial unit, such as the Jews and Germans." [Ref. 19:: p. 20] Cultural autonomy for these groups is rejected on ideological grounds thus encouraging a strong Jewish and German desire to emigrate. Another policy that adversely affects the nationalities is the Soviet policy of centralization, particularly economic centralization. "In the 1977 Constitution of the USSR, the economy of the USSR is referred to as a 'single national economic complex which encompasses all sectors of social production, distribution, and exchange' within the country." [Ref. 19: p. 20]

The following sections will examine the potential impact of the changing demographic balance on the USSR. Uneven population growth has led to an irregular distribution of available manpower across the Soviet Union. These demographic trends are of major importance for all Soviets, affecting not only the labor force and military, but placing increasing demands on the system for education, housing and, perhaps, for access to all aspects of Soviet society.





TABLE I

Population of Major Soviet Ethnic Groups:  
1959, 1970 and 1979

Population in thousands

Ethnic Groups	1959	1970	1979
Russians	114,114	129,015	137,397
Ukrainians	37,253	40,753	42,347
Uzbeks	6,015	9,195	12,456
Belorussians	7,913	9,052	9,463
Kazakhs	3,622	5,299	6,556
Tatars	4,968	5,931	6,317
Azerbaijdzhanis	2,940	4,380	5,477
Armenians	2,787	3,559	4,151
Georgians	2,692	3,245	3,571
Moldavians	2,214	2,698	2,968
Tadzhiks	1,397	2,136	2,898
Lithuanians	2,326	2,665	2,851
Turkmens	1,002	1,525	2,028
Germans	1,620	1,846	1,936
Kirgiz	969	1,452	1,906
Jews	2,268	2,151	1,811
Chuvash	1,470	1,694	1,751
Latvians	1,400	1,430	1,439
Bashkirs	989	1,240	1,371
Mordvinians	1,285	1,263	1,192
Poles	1,380	1,167	1,151
Estonians	989	1,007	1,020
Chechens	419	613	756
Udmurts	625	704	714
Mari	504	599	602
Ossetians	413	468	542
Avars	270	396	483
Komi and Komi-Permyaki	431	475	478
Koreans	314	358	369
Lezgins	223	324	383
Bulgarians	324	351	361
Buryats	253	315	353
Greeks	309	337	344



Population, continued

Ethnic Groups		1959	1970	1979
Yakuts	:	233	296	328
Karabardinians	:	204	280	322
Karakalpaks	:	173	236	303
Dargins	:	158	231	287
Kумыks	:	135	189	228
Uyghur	:	95	173	211
Gypsies	:	132	175	209
Ingush	:	196	158	186
Gagauz	:	124	157	173
Hungarians	:	155	166	171
Tuvinians	:	100	139	166
Kalmyks	:	106	137	147
Karelians	:	167	146	138
Karachay	:	81	113	131
Romanians	:	106	119	129
Kurds	:	59	89	116
Adyge	:	80	100	109
Laks	:	64	86	100

Source: Ralph S. Clem, "Ethnicity and its Implications", The Bulletin of Atomic Scientists, June/July 1982, p. 53.



TABLE II

Average Annual Growth Rate (in percent)

Ethnic Groups	1959-1970	1970-1979
Russians	1.1	.7
Ukrainian	.8	.4
Uzbeks	3.9	3.4
Belorussians	1.2	.5
Kazakhs	3.5	2.4
Tatars	1.6	.7
Azerbaidzhanis	3.7	2.5
Armenians	2.2	1.7
Georgians	1.7	1.1
Moldavians	1.8	1.1
Tadzhiks	3.9	3.4
Lithuanians	1.2	.8
Turkmens	3.9	3.2
Germans	1.2	.5
Kirgiz	3.7	3.1
Jews	- .5	-1.6
Chuvash	1.3	.4
Latvians	.2	.1
Bashkirs	2.1	1.1
Mordvinians	- .2	- .6
Poles	-1.3	- .1
Estonians	.2	.1
Chechens	3.5	2.4
Udmurts	1.1	.2
Mari	1.6	.4
Ossetians	1.5	1.2
Avars	3.5	2.2
Komi and Komi-Permyaki	.9	.1
Koreans	1.2	.9
Lezgins	3.5	1.9
Bulgarians	.7	.3
Buryats	2.0	1.3
Greeks	.8	.2
Yakuts	2.2	1.1
Karabardinians	2.9	1.6
Karakalpaks	2.9	2.8
Dargins	3.5	2.4
Kumyks	3.1	2.1



# Growth Rate, continued

Ethnic Groups	1959-1970	1970-1979
Uyghur	5.6	2.2
Gypsies	2.6	2.0
Ingush	3.7	1.8
Gagauz	2.2	1.1
Hungarians	.6	.3
Tuvinians	3.0	2.0
Kalmyks	2.4	.8
Karelians	-1.1	- .6
Karachay	3.1	1.7
Romanians	1.1	.9
Kurds	3.8	3.0
Adyge	2.0	1.0
Laks	2.7	1.7

Source: Ralph S. Clem, "Ethnicity and its Implications", The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, June/July 1982, p. 56.





TABLE III

Percent of Total Soviet Population

Ethnic Groups	1959	1970	1979
Russians	54.65	53.37	52.42
Ukrainians	17.84	16.86	16.16
Uzbeks	2.88	3.80	4.75
Belorussians	3.78	3.74	3.61
Kazakhs	1.73	2.19	2.50
Tatars	2.38	2.45	2.41
Azerbaidzhanis	1.41	1.81	2.08
Armenians	1.33	1.47	1.58
Georgians	1.29	1.34	1.36
Moldavians	1.06	1.12	1.13
Tadzhiks	.67	.88	1.11
Lithuanians	1.11	1.10	1.09
Turkøens	.48	.63	.77
Germans	.78	.76	.74
Kirgiz	.46	.60	.73
Jews	1.09	.89	.69
Chuvash	.70	.70	.67
Latvians	.67	.59	.55
Bashkirs	.47	.51	.52
Mordvinians	.62	.52	.45
Poles	.66	.48	.44
Estonians	.47	.42	.39
Chechens	.20	.25	.29
Udmurts	.30	.29	.27
Mari	.24	.25	.24
Ossetians	.20	.20	.21
Avars	.13	.16	.18
Komi and Komi-Permyaki	.21	.20	.18
Koreans	.15	.15	.15
Lezgins	.11	.13	.15
Bulgarians	.16	.15	.14
Buryats	.12	.13	.13
Greeks	.15	.14	.13
Yakuts	.11	.12	.13
Karabardinians	.10	.12	.12
Karakalpaks	.08	.10	.12
Dargins	.08	.10	.11
Kumyks	.06	.08	.09



Percent of Population, continued

Ethnic Group		1959	1970	1979
Uyghur		.05	.07	.08
Gypsies		.06	.07	.08
Ingush		.05	.07	.07
Gagauz		.06	.06	.07
Hungarians		.07	.07	.07
Tuvinians		.05	.06	.06
Kalmyks		.05	.06	.06
Karelians		.08	.06	.05
Karachay		.04	.05	.05
Romanians		.05	.05	.05
Kurds		.03	.04	.04
Adyge		.04	.04	.04
Laks		.03	.04	.04

Source: Ralph S. Clem, "Ethnicity and its Implications", The Bulletin of Atomic Scientists, June/July 1982, p. 53.



#### IV. ETHNICITY IN THE USSR TODAY: EMERGENT NATIONALITY PROBLEMS

##### A. INTRODUCTION

Because of the dramatic decline in Slavic population growth and the concomitant rise in growth among the Asian Muslims, the drop in the number of Russians is bound to have far-reaching, and perhaps deleterious, effects on the Soviet Union. The non-European ethnic groups continue to erode the Russian share of the total population, prompting Clem's observation that "the Soviet leadership will need to decide to what extent these nationalities should be further integrated into the elite power structure, a decision obviously fraught with serious implications." [Ref. 11: p. 14]

Concern over this growing disparity is reflected in mounting official actions. In 1970 a special high-level Scientific Council on Nationality Problems under the Presidium of the Academy of Sciences was created to explore the issues. [Ref. 20: p. 365] Several of the policies designed to assuage the nascent crisis will be discussed below. But little can change the figures of people already born. By 2000 A.D. between 20 and 24 percent of the country's total population and almost 40 percent of its teenagers and young adults will be non-European. [Ref. 20: p. 365] The "deep-seated psychological and political anxieties among members of the ruling elite"



[Ref. 20: p. 365] aroused by the recognition of the burgeoning Asian population is seen reflected in the epithet yellowing applied to it. Azrael relates several jokes about this anxiety including one that "when you scratch a Russian you find a Tatar." [Ref. 20: p. 365]

There is growing disparity between the European and non-European nationalities, not only in growth rates, but manifested in economic dilemmas, military consequences, political implications, and potential conflicts. These will be discussed below. The problems of the nationalities have an unique place in internal Soviet structural dynamics. Clem argues that "ethnicity in the USSR has continued to be a salient force, perhaps even the salient force in Soviet polity and society." [Ref. 11: p. 15] This is underscored by R. Pipes when he notes that the "Soviet Union is the only major power where the dominant nationality barely has a majority." [Ref. 21: p. 1]

## B. ECONOMIC DILEMMAS

First to be considered are the economic dilemmas resulting from the growing demographic imbalances. Pipes argues that perhaps "the most important single element which keeps ethnic feelings alive in multinational states is competition for resources and services." [Ref. 21: p. 3] This must be particularly true of a non-consumer oriented country such as the USSR. The unequal distribution of goods





and services serves as a catalyst to politicize ethnicity. However, the focus of this paper is on the problems caused by ethnicity, here, in particular economic ones. These can be viewed first in the European areas and then in the non-European areas of the Soviet Union.

The Soviet Union suffers from enormous deformations (to use Soviet official jargon) of capital and labor seen in a classic north/south split. About 75 percent of the Soviet industrial output is concentrated in the European north where the labor pool is dwindling. The south, where the working-age population is growing, remains relatively undeveloped. "The Soviets either must devote enormous capital resources to develop the south or move labor to the industrial areas in the north, which would require a great increase in capital expenditure on housing in that area." [Ref. 14: p. 28] Given the large portion of the gross national product that goes to the military, and the projected fall in Soviet economic growth rates, such an increase could seriously affect an economy whose capital resources are already strained and whose uneven population growth has led to a very irregular distribution of available manpower.

Andropov focused on domestic economic problems in his first major policy statement after becoming Secretary General. Though I am unaware if these problems were specifically addressed, any resolution attempts are certain



to be costly and controversial. Yet, the declining European workforce focuses attention on the possibility of a stagnant economy. Azrael notes

What makes this prospect particularly unsettling is the fact that the vast bulk of the increase in industrial output that has occurred in the postwar Soviet Union is attributable to increases in the European work force rather than to increases in per capita labor productivity, which has grown only moderately despite the regime's frantic efforts to raise it. Even if it manages to replenish its European work force--by reducing draft terms and/or draft quotas, curtailing full-time secondary schooling, or accelerating the already rapid flight of young Europeans from the countryside--the only way the regime can hope to staff the many new enterprises on which it has staked so much of its prestige and credibility is either to locate the bulk of them in Central Asia or to mobilize large numbers of Central Asians for work in other regions. Unfortunately for the regime, however, these policies could exact a very heavy price. [Ref. 20: pp. 367-368]

As seen above, one solution usually proposed is the increased utilization of non-Europeans into the industrialized labor force. This yellowing of the national economy is troubling to the Soviet leadership because, as a rule, the Central Asians have "remained outside the mainstream of the country's economic development and contain a heavy preponderance of undereducated peasants with a weak-to-nonexistent knowledge of Russian and a tenacious aversion to interregional or even intraregional migration." [Ref. 20: p. 367] The mobility of non-Europeans is severely inhibited by their unfamiliarity with Russian language and culture.

The growing numbers of Central Asians will probably do little voluntarily to alleviate labor shortages elsewhere in



the Soviet Union as they are generally quite traditional and homeland-loving. They have little inclination to abandon rural ways of life for cold water, shared bath/kitchen facilities, and miniscule apartments in some far-away, lonely city where they would not even speak the language.

Even proposals to shift some of the industrial plants to Central Asia have a number of drawbacks other than the cost of relocation. First is the difficulty of transporting industrial plants in a country as large as the USSR and as lacking in modern transportation networks. Second, "it will take years for Central Asians to develop the skills and urban life-style necessary to staff big industrial facilities." [Ref. 5: p. 160] Also, much of the Soviet Union's raw materials and markets are far from Central Asia, further compounding the transportation dilemma. Finally, as Meyer notes, "Soviet Central Asia is too close to China. The Russians are unwilling to install big industrial facilities within range of Chinese weapons. And while no Soviet will admit this publicly, there is apparently some fear that in a Sino-Soviet war the people of the Central Asian Republics might not be entirely clear about which side they want to win." [Ref. 5: p. 160]

Another aspect of Soviet ethnic problems directly related to their economic difficulties is that of regional development. Since World War II much official attention has been given to how overall economic growth is to be





distributed across the Soviet Union. In the almost forty years since the war, economic development has concentrated key industries usually in European areas, largely to the exclusion of the rest of the country. Development, or the lack thereof, is increasingly becoming an ethnic issue complicated, as noted above, by the location of raw materials. Further, if "policy-makers involved in the allocating of scarce investment funds were forced to choose between an economically more feasible project on the one hand and a less feasible project designed to bolster a lagging ethnoterritory on the other, the choice in most instances would no doubt have been the former." [Ref. 11: p. 10] Yet, as long as significant disparities exist in economic treatment of the various regions, some resentment is bound to occur.

Russian ethnocentrism also exacerbates this problem. In response to the growing demands of non-Russian groups, a powerful pro-Russian backlash has been triggered. Russians are very mindful of their history, and feel that they are responsible for the greatness of the Soviet Union. Further, they are extremely race-conscious "with a strong distaste and even contempt for non-Slavs and especially non-whites." [Ref. 5: p. 165] The population yellowing dismays them. They strongly resent the need to divert money from Siberia, which is viewed as the Soviet Union's future, to the regional needs of border nations (for, of course, money





cannot be diverted from the military). "Russians seem thoroughly outraged as they repeatedly discover that Georgians and Armenians are so unpatriotic as to put their own local interests before those of the Soviet Union." [Ref. 5: p. 165]

### C. MILITARY CONSEQUENCES

The military is demographically ordained to undergo a yellowing process unless drastic measures are taken by the central authorities. This only compounds the other problems currently facing the Soviet military such as drug abuse, rampant alcoholism, epidemics caused by poor living conditions, crime and corruption. With the ethnic changes, it is estimated that by the year 2000 about 40 percent of all persons turning eighteen will be of Muslim origin. As this cohort is the source of military draftees, the end results will be growing difficulties in the coming years as the military attempts to adjust to ever larger numbers of Muslim conscripts.

Russians largely dominate the Soviet military. Nearly all senior officers are Russian--the few exceptions being non-Russian Slavs. Recruits are segregated by ethnic groups for both linguistic and political reasons. This is not to indicate that they are segregated by specific ethnic group to serve together, but that many non-Europeans usually serve in construction units while most Europeans serve in such



high-priority units as the Strategic Rocket Force and the armored corps. This may be based, in part, on the necessity of speaking fluent Russian for assignment to high-priority units. The non-European conscripts pose a threat to the already weakened efficiency of the Soviet armed forces. "Non-Slavic minority draftees have demonstrated a notoriously poor knowledge of Russian, which is the sole language of communication in this most Russian of all Soviet institutions." [Ref. 15: p. 62]

Further, non-European draftees generally do not have an urban-oriented education and thus take much longer to adjust to an industrialized military. Some argue, notably William Odom, that the demographic imbalance will not have a significant impact on Soviet military manpower policy because "the trained reserve manpower pool is sufficiently large for baby booms and busts to be absorbed without a noticeable effect on force levels or change in military service policy." [Ref. 22: pp. 13-14] He seems to have missed the point of the long range implications of this change.

Another analyst, Ellen Jones, argues that difficulties with ethnic minorities may be less serious than the disciplinary problems resulting from excessive hazing of new conscripts, alcohol and drug abuse, and poor leadership in non-prestigious units. [Ref. 23: P. 285] She notes that the Soviets rely on a mass army based on conscription. Its



key roles include both providing military security to the USSR and a number of economic and social non-military services. Jones comments that the "military constitutes a flexible source of labor to help ease regional labor shortages." [Ref. 24: p. 107] Yet, as noted elsewhere in this paper, manning the military has contributed, in part, to such shortages.

Jones further describes how the military can exert a positive influence on non-Russian soldiers by exposing large numbers of them to an "integrated and concentrated political socialization program in a highly regimented environment." [Ref. 24: p. 108] Perhaps the Soviet intent is to dilute nationalist loyalties and maximize political assimilation. If such is the case, the European Soviets must maintain a strong grip on the structure of the military and not allow the gradually increasing numbers of non-Europeans to gain dominance.

Historical parallels are tenuous and inexact. However, various imperial armies of the past have been comprised of both dominant and minority groups, with the latter gradually increasing both in size and power. It would be interesting to pursue an analogy between the Soviet army of 2000 with the Roman army of A.D. 300.

Aggravating the problems of communication in a military system, where many of the draftees do not speak the lingua franca of Russian, is the potential for racial violence





between the European and non-European members of the military. Apparently some incidents have already occurred. Generally the "undereducated Asians are given menial jobs such as kitchen work and manual labor, triggering strains that frequently erupt in barracks brawls." [Ref. 25: pp. 25-26] Yet, this must be tempered by the realization that much of this information comes from emigres who may have biased viewpoints.

The Soviet Chief of Staff speaks openly about the Russian-language deficiencies of the Central Asian recruits, which is reflected, in part, by their military assignments. "Young Moslems have been largely prevented from serving in elite units--the Strategic Rocket Force, the Navy and the Air Force. About 85 percent of all these forces appear to be made up of Slavs. To the degree Moslems are assigned to these forces they are in menial positions." [Ref. 14: P. 28] A Russian publication highlighted this problem of draftees with poor knowledge of Russian, commenting that their military units were solicitously helping them "to overcome quickly the 'language barrier', and to take a more active part in the life of the collective, and to learn to operate modern military technology more successfully." [Ref. 26: p. 8]

As the proportion of non-Europeans in the military grows it will become almost impossible for the military to continue "its present practice of assigning non-Slavs to low





priority units and packing the high priority units with Slavs." [Ref. 11: p. 163] This will have enormous impact on the military's effectiveness in its traditional role of suppressing internal (i.e., national) unrest.

Another major implication of the increasing numbers of non-Europeans in the higher priority units is that the unit's efficiency will be lessened. The non-Europeans may be ineffective in combat because many do not speak or understand Russian. This could result in severe command and control problems. Most officers would be Europeans, usually speaking only Russian, while a significant portion of the rank and file will be Central Asians. These non-Europeans will also reduce efficiency in the sense that many are not as educated as their European counterparts, nor are they as Sovietized with Soviet/Russian goals and loyalties. Compounding this efficiency problem are the growing forces of nationalism in the Soviet Union. As the growing demographic changes force the central government to cope with the military manpower problems, those difficulties that presently seem non-threatening will have a significant impact on the efficiency of the Soviet military.

#### D. POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS

The impact of demographic shifts will also be seen in the Soviet political arena. Despite official claims that a new Soviet people has emerged, much evidence exists to



contradict this. Azrael presents several countervailing examples. "Many members of the country's major diaspora nationalities, including not only Jews but also the Volga Germans, the Greeks, and the Meshkhetian Turks, have become so embittered at the continued denial of their communal rights that they have renounced their Soviet citizenship and have demanded to be repatriated to their quite foreign homelands." [Ref. 20: p. 376] Outspoken critics of Soviet nationality policies and practices have appeared in nearly all of the European areas. A number of nationalistically inspired acts of violence have occurred. Further, there have been many organized protests against centrally imposed curbs on national self-expression.

Membership in local ethnographic and historical societies has grown dramatically. These seem to reflect the nationalistic yearnings of their members. The final point Azrael makes is that there "have been numerous cases in which native Party and State officials, including two republic Party First secretaries with seats in the Politburo...have shown a certain laxity in combating the forces of local nationalism and have pursued the parochial interests of their fellow nationals at the expense of their all-union responsibilities." [Ref. 20: p. 377]

The Soviet political approach to nationalism has been colored by their "divide et impera" policy. They tend to deliberately exaggerate ethnic differences among the



minorities. Therefore, while there are over 100 identifiable ethnic groups within the Soviet Union, perhaps only a dozen or so are politically viable. These, according to Pipes, include the following groups: Ukrainians; Belorussians; Muslims (nearly all of whom are Sunni and Turkic in background); Georgians; Armenians; the Jews; the three Baltic nationalities; East Asians; and, some mixed West European, most notably the Germans. [Ref. 21: p. 2]

Carrere tends to agree, but notes that the various peoples of the Soviet Union can be considered in three categories. The first category is those members of small national communities who are growing weaker and being assimilated, notably some Siberian groups. She identifies a second group with a high degree of national consciousness, but weak by circumstance, most particularly some of the Baltic nations. The third group is comprised of the ethnically conscious and demographically viable nationalities of Central Asia and the Caucasus. [Ref. 9: p. 267]

Why does this nationalistic sentiment survive today? Croan discusses the upsurge of ethnopolitical loyalties noting that they "not only mock prospects for a viable international order...but also defy expectations, whether Marxist or liberal, of the demise of ethnic identification and a waning of nationalism..." [Ref. 7: p. 71] Further, the alternatives to their own nationalism for Soviet





citizens are assimilation or Russification. The Soviet authorities continually stress the need to draw together the various states, which is tantamount to Russification, and anathema to many Soviets. Pipes concludes that the most important element in prolonging and expanding nationalistic feelings in the Soviet Union "is competition for resources and services. This is true in every multinational society, but is a particularly potent factor in the USSR where the government enjoys a monopoly of national wealth and doles out products and services no more than it must." [Ref. 21: p. 4]

With the increases in education and communication it has become increasingly difficult to isolate the masses from the effects of nationalist sentiments. Most national areas not only utilize their own language but teach and publish in it. Further, all citizens must carry internal passports which emphasize their nationality. "Nationality is determined solely by parentage; place of birth or current residence is irrelevant." [Ref. 5: p. 156]

The final aspect of the potential political implications of the Soviet demographic shift is seen in the growing tendency among Russians to assert their nationality. Russians are very race and history conscious. Because of the unitary format of the CPSU, the Russians are a ruling oligarchy dominating the USSR. As their population starts to decline they will become one ethnic group among many--though





a very large one. At present, the Russians populate most of the big cities, run the government, staff the top ranks of the party, man the technical and combat formations of the military and work the industries. With the loss of their majority status, some authorities see the Russians suffering psychological distress over decisions on how to best deal with the situation. In 1975 Zbigniew Brzezinski wrote that "the national question...could prove itself to be the fatal contradiction of Soviet political evolution." [Ref. 5: p. 165]

#### E. POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

A Soviet writer, whose work on demography was published by Pravda Publishers, notes that population "policy is unquestionably within the national competence of sovereign countries." [Ref. 27: p. 83] He distinguishes between demographic policy and population policy in general. Demographic policy is confined to direct state influences on people while population policy "tries to influence the socio-economic conditions of reproduction of the population in their entire aggregate, including its higher literacy and cultural level of the change in the life style and the role of women in society." [Ref. 27: p. 99] The goal of Soviet population policy is to encourage optimal reproduction of the population as a whole and to specifically encourage particular republics. Such policy must be long term because



of demographic inertia, yet timely, in order to prevent demographic problems from becoming irresolvable.

The Soviets have put forward a number of possible solutions to their nationality problems, though none are as drastic as those reached by the Chinese in attempting to resolve Chinese population problems, such as their strident encouragement of one child per family. Many of these revolve around trying to convince European women to increase the sizes of their families--the so-called pro-natalist policies. In 1974 the Government announced "that women who give birth to ten or more children, in addition to getting the traditional mother-heroine designation, would henceforth be eligible for a Glory of Motherhood order and a Motherhood Medal." [Ref. 5: p. 164] It would seem that these awards will go mostly to Muslim mothers. Official Soviet concern and resulting policies have been due largely to the proddings of concerned Soviet demographers. Gradually, the leaders are being forced to acknowledge that something must be done to reverse the decline of the Soviet (read Russian) family.

At the Twenty-fifth Party Congress, Brezhnev apparently called for a "more effective population policy" to include uniform policies on family size, maternity and child care allowances, and working conditions for women. No uniform policies were adopted because of the high costs predicted. However, a more differentiated policy concentrating on



specific regions and groups has resulted. Some policies involve regionally differentiated timetables for maternity leave, rises in birth grants and boosts in child allowances, even to unwed mothers. However, these incentives are too limited to overcome the disincentives of crowded living conditions and the superwoman, working woman syndrome. Urban Soviet mothers and wives are expected to not only work at full time jobs, but provide all the amenities of homelife. This frequently means standing long hours in lines for necessities for the home. Soviet men generally do not help in the home.

An article intriguingly entitled, "Help for Singles in the USSR" gave a number of rather intimate examples of the skewed demographic situation and attempts to resolve it. For example, "Grey-eyed blond woman wishes to become acquainted with a serious, non-drinking, intellectual man, between the age of fifty-six and sixty." [Ref. 28: p. 7] Similar such ads have appeared throughout the Soviet Union in various newspapers highlighting the sexual imbalance. Another instance of official concern over the low European birthrate was seen in a district of Moscow where young people were bombarded with pro-family information during "Soviet Family Week". This was done in the hopes of convincing them that State recognition of large families had substantial material benefits, in addition to being patriotic.





There are other alternatives to home production of workers. It is possible that the Soviet Union may be forced to recruit numbers of foreign workers to fill labor deficits. This has been done in the past and is a time honored practice. Many Germans came to Russia to work for the Czars. Some Vietnamese may have helped work on the pipelines. Azrael notes that large numbers of Chinese were used during the 1950's, while some East European and Scandinavian workers are being used on special projects today. [Ref. 20: p. 369]

In December 1980 the Supreme Soviet adopted a new law on military obligations. According to this new decree all males are liable for military service at age eighteen. Reporting on this development, Lev Yodovich explains that the only deferments available will be for those who have enrolled in institutes of higher education offering "training of interest to the Ministry of Defence". [Ref. 29: p. 7] This will result in an additional 700,000-800,000 recruits each year beginning in 1983. The government has also increased military training in civilian institutes, and is pushing the slogan, "Today's students are tomorrow's officers." [Ref. 29: p. 7]

Traditionally, officers have been trained in military academies. But increasingly, the Soviets are turning to an "ROTC" program in their civilian institutes, thus creating "true centres of military-patriotic work" according to the





Ministry of Defense. [Ref. 29: p. 6] Students completing the course work are given junior officer rank and can be called up depending on the military's need for their services. Predictably, this drain away from the civilian economy further increases its skilled worker labor shortage and undermines the economy.

#### F. POTENTIAL CONFLICTS

The growing disparity in growth rates among the various Soviet republics has caused official concern and reaction; yet, generally there do not seem to be any long range solutions. The potential for conflict among the varying nationalities will probably grow and is very likely to center on consumer problems. Particularly sensitive issues will be access to jobs, housing and schooling. If Americans think it difficult to operate in English with all our minority groups, how would we deal with a plethora of official secondary languages?

At present, systemic constraints have prevented, for the most part, any open expression of the desire for separation. These constraints further restrict overt ethnic competition. Yet, throughout the Soviet Union as Rakowska-Harmstone writes, "the whole fabric of Soviet society is permeated, subtly, but unmistakably, by ethnic antagonisms and competition..." [Ref. 12: p. 75] Ethnic self-assertion aims at maximizing national autonomy and has a goal of gaining as much self-determination as possible.



It has been argued that as the nationalities tend to push for their rights, and even as they just become more evident in the Soviet Union, the government will be a more unyielding to any demands made. "The Kremlin may have no choice but to adopt a hard-line response to nationalist pressure if it wants to keep centrifugal forces from tearing the Soviet Union apart." [Ref. 5: p. 166] As a result, internal repression is likely to grow worse.



## V. IMPACT OF EMERGENT NATIONALITY PROBLEMS ON SOVIET FOREIGN POLICY

### A. INTRODUCTION

Soviet foreign policy is the result of a highly developed bureaucratic political system which is resistant to change and rigid with conservatism. Decisionmaking is quite politicized with the Politburo and more specifically, the Central Committee, at the center of the process. For any given foreign policy issue, the leadership considers both the possible international consequences and the potential impact on domestic politics. Domestic political constraints became particularly important under Brezhnev's leadership and continued to be key issues under Andropov the caretaker. It is far too early to know what direction Chernenko will take, or what his stands are on specific issues. Since the Soviet Union is essentially a collective leadership, with fluid coalitions or blocs, creating consensus for policy formation is the key to power consolidation.

Soviet foreign policy is generally based on a series of key images of national security. Above all, the Soviet Union wants to survive both as a state and as a world superpower. The Soviet Union wants to avoid nuclear confrontation with the U.S., while maintaining or surpassing military parity. Mindful of past experiences, the Soviets see the Eastern European buffer states as vital to Soviet



security. They are determined to prevent the rise of an equal or superior power in Europe, while China poses a distinct challenge both as an Asian (and eventually global) military power and rival leader for the international communist movement. They seek to lessen U.S. commitments both to NATO and Japan, while protesting U.S. involvement in Third World endeavors. If possible, the Soviets seek to utilize potential Third World opportunities, which underscores a Soviet dilemma--the need for more allies and the inability to afford them all.

From this overview, specific Soviet foreign policy priorities can be drawn from Article Twenty-eight of the Soviet Constitution. Using Soviet rhetoric and vernacular, these include:

1. Securing favorable international conditions for the construction of Communism in the USSR;
2. Strengthening the position of world socialism;
3. Supporting the struggle of national liberation and social progress;
4. Preventing wars of aggression;
5. Achieving general and complete disarmament; and,
6. Consistently implementing the principle of peaceful coexistence between states of differing social orders. [Ref. 30: p. 170]

From these goals several conclusions can be drawn. First, one of the most important tasks of Soviet foreign policy is to protect the power position of the Soviet leadership and, in doing so, protect their various domestic programs and





goals. Effective foreign policy must also strengthen, and perhaps increase Soviet hegemonic control. To do so, the Soviets use a wide range of tools to implement their foreign policy.

Of various aspects of Soviet government, foreign policy is probably one of the least susceptible to direct influence and/or involvement by members of the population. "Izvestia's" political observer, Aleksandr Bovin, told a Swedish interviewer that

...while the political decisionmaking process in the West takes place as though at a circus before the eyes of a colossal number of spectators, we have a different tradition. Our decisionmaking processes run their course without too much publicity. It is important that the people taking part in the decisionmaking process retain maximum objectivity in their evaluation of the actual issues. Pressure from public opinion could make their approach to the problems more difficult when decisions are made in public. That is why we think that, at the present stage of development at least, it is better for these problems to be handled with as little public access as possible... [Ref. 31: p. 7]

Michael Rywkin, writing on Soviet Central Asia and the state, argues that the "reluctance to take into consideration the possible impact of non-Russian groups within the USSR on the conduct of Soviet foreign policy comes from the general impression that public opinion has little bearing on Soviet decision-making, and ethnic opinion least of all, with the obvious exception of Russian nationalist feelings." [Ref. 32: p. 64] He concludes that Moscow is not insensitive to public opinion, citing diverse examples ranging from the tolerance of Georgian nationalism,



and pro-Arab Soviet policies being influenced by a desire to please Soviet Muslim states.

However, foreign affairs "inevitably require, in Communist as in other polities, great reliance on authoritative institutions." [Ref. 33: p. 38] The secretiveness of central policy development further complicates input from a multiplicity of sources and is conducted completely out of the public domain. Any perception and analysis of Soviet foreign policy is always hypothetical and even speculative. [Ref. 34: p. 3] Throughout the 1970's, the USSR was on a foreign policy offensive, backed by a steady military buildup. Odom notes that Brezhnev "combined foreign policy mobilism with domestic policy immobilism. [Ref. 22: p. 5] The leaders of the 1980's will have to face the economic entropy, massive corruption and domestic stagnation that Brezhnev left as a legacy.

Soviet foreign policy is a result of a mix of capabilities and opportunities. Yet, a crucial determinant will be the Soviet domestic context. The European decline in birthrate contrasted with the non-European growth, coupled with rising societal expectations led Alvin Rubinstein to conclude that this "may intensify discord among nationality groups. Some Western experts believe this to be the tinder that could cause the regime much trouble." [Ref. 3: p. 285]



How Brezhnev's legacy will affect Soviet foreign policy decisions will be further tempered by the role of ethnicity in Soviet foreign policy. However, it is difficult to specifically link demographic trends to Soviet foreign policy. Yet, ethnic concerns may help shape, or even create, a context that affects the various alternatives available to decisionmakers. A Soviet writer, Arab-Ogly, claims that "demographic problems exert a growing influence both on the internal policies of individual countries and on international relations in general." [Ref. 27: p. 80] He further argues that because all global problems are interconnected, solution of any one indirectly determines the success with others.

Carrere notes that since Khrushchev "responded to his growing domestic difficulties by seeking legitimacy through foreign affairs" the Soviet Union has believed that achievement of both political and military parity with the U.S. is based in part on "elimination of Soviet economic difficulties and technological backwardness." [Ref. 9: p. 55] Using the breakdowns of Guns versus Butter, Power, The Military, and Exports, the following paragraphs will briefly examine the impact of emergent Soviet nationality problems on their foreign policy.

## B. GUNS VERSUS BUTTER

Much attention has been paid recently to the growing consumer discontent in the Soviet Union. Economic entropy





has been underscored by the growing second economy and widespread corruption. With the military/industrial complex highly favored over consumer oriented production, there are dramatic shortfalls in meeting consumer demands. Some of the local regions are pressing for more economic self-determination. "Simply put, local leaders...are no longer content to stand by helplessly while their homelands' economies are managed, or mismanaged, by Moscow planners for the benefit of the Russian Republic." [Ref. 5: p. 160]

Issues of financial assistance and allocation of national money have inescapable ethnic and racial connotations in the Soviet Union. Financing the military/industrial complex, and the heavy price to maintain the Soviet Union's foreign policy is a burden to the Soviet citizens. And it seems to cost some more than others. Several sources have noted the rising episodes, (i.e., violence) relating to demands for more local control of the economy, ranging from Lithuania to Georgia to Armenia and even to those ungrateful Central Asian republics. The indications are that the non-Russians suffer most from the Soviet economic imbalances.

To appease a growing non-Russian population, should the central authorities decide to allocate more funds to their regional development, there will be less money for other regions (leading to increased inter-regional rivalry) or, less likely, less money spent on the military. If this





money is diverted from the military and various foreign policy objectives, Soviet ethnic problems will have a direct impact on foreign policy.

A subset of the guns-versus-butter impasse is the difficulty of having a growing labor pool in an area where there is no industry, further complicated by the declining number of Europeans available for military service. Attempts to resolve this problem can have significant impacts on Soviet foreign policy. First, if the length of military service is extended, there will be fewer workers in the labor force. Another alternative is to allow more Central Asians into the military mainstream. This will not only have a trickle-back effect on the economy, but will, as discussed above, possibly result in a less efficient military. As is indicated in the next section on power, Soviet foreign policy is frequently linked to their military power.

### C. POWER

An assumption underlying this paper is that a strong domestic base is important to successful foreign policy. It is not that the domestic base must support policy, but that it does not withdraw vital resources or divert substantial central political attention from it. To retain their primus inter pares status as they dip below the numerical population majority, the Russians must somehow find a means



of maintaining their power. Ethnicity as a social and political force is on the rise. "Politicization of ethnicity is thus a dialectical process that preserves ethnic groups by emphasizing their singularity and yet also engineers and lubricates their modernization by transforming them into political conflict groups for the modern political arena..." [Ref. 35: p. 3]

Rasma Karklins noted that the "question of power is at the core of nationality relations in the Soviet Union." [Ref. 36: p. 70] The distribution of power between the center and the periphery, the Europeans and non-Europeans, is skewed to the center's advantage, allowing it, at present, to maintain power over the whole.

Contestants for political power, those who design and implement Soviet foreign policy, can use domestic issues to strengthen their positions. While at present there are only a few powerful non-Europeans in any policy making position (Geidar Alirza ogly Aliyev, the First Deputy Premier from the Muslim Republic of Azerbaijan, being a notable exception), it is possible that, as their numbers grow, non-Europeans can have more impact on domestic issues and thus more input into aspects of foreign policy.

A primary means of exercising power is through control of the military. As noted in Chapter Four, the Soviet military is dominated by ethnic Russians. It would seem that this dominance would be very slow to shift, despite the



demographic changes underway. The Soviet military officer class is a tight society, generally closed to non-Europeans. The USSR is a superpower because it is a strong military power. The primary drive and impetus behind that power are the Russians. From this power comes the primary means to affect Soviet foreign policy outside of sitting on the Central Committee.

#### D. THE MILITARY

The Soviet military is a means of implementing foreign policy. If, its efficiency is in any way lessened, then its ability to successfully pursue national objectives as an instrument of foreign policy could be somewhat hampered. This seems to be particularly true with respect to the use of Muslim troops in foreign, notably Muslim, countries.

The lessons of the Afghanistan experience are difficult to judge because of the lack of consistent information. Nevertheless, the available evidence indicates certain problems with Muslims bartering Soviet military equipment and supplies, defections to the Afghan side, and refusals to fire on fellow Muslims. At the very least, the experience of Soviet Muslims in Afghanistan has almost certainly heightened their awareness of both the outside world and the Soviet leadership's willingness to suppress other Muslim peoples. [Ref. 37: p. 327]

The Soviets are a very historically conscious nation. Their history is essentially the history of Russia through official Communist filters. Lessons from the past are applied to the present, whether or not appropriate in context. When World War II broke out, the national buffer states proved to be the weakest link in the Soviet system.





Even before the war, the Soviets were concerned about the loyalty of their ethnic minority groups. Nora Beloff relates that after the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact was signed in 1939 many Poles serving in the Soviet Army were shot. "Stalin must have known that once he had agreed with Hitler on another partition of Poland he could hardly count on the loyalty of Polish soldiers when the Red Army was needed to police the Soviet share of their country." [Ref. 38: p. 41] While Chernenko is not Stalin, it is likely that the central authorities will avoid at all costs using ethnic minorities against their own people, or in actions in strategically vital areas.

In the years to come, the demographic shifts presently underway could seriously affect the implementation of Soviet foreign policies through military power. As the numbers of Europeans in the nation decline, the Soviet leaders face increasing problems in recruiting a military they feel they can both trust and find efficient. These military manpower dimensions are not now a serious problem for the USSR. Whether they will be in the future is problematical. But, given the Soviet propensity to manage rather than solve their problems, it would seem that long term effects on the Soviet military could hamper the attainment of foreign policy goals. As a military superpower, anything adversely affecting the military has the potential to adversely affect that power. How much effect the demographic changes will





have on the military before the central authorities are forced to resolve it is a problem for the future.

#### E. EXPORTS

The exportation of communist ideas affecting nationality and ethnic issues highlight inconsistencies in the Soviet system. The Soviet Union claims that its nationalities problem has been solved and "offers itself as a model for multi-ethnic societies of the developing world." [Ref. 1: p. 1] Its solution was administrative division of the country according to nationality. "Now Moscow pushes hard for the assimilation of all Soviet nationalities with the Russians, and for eventually erasing internal nationality boundary lines. The leaders at the same time promote the contrary idea abroad--of the need for separation or segregation into nationality units." [Ref. 39: p. viii] These inconsistencies in nationalist policies may prove difficult for the USSR in the years to come.

Yet, as Farmer notes, "the evidence is overwhelming that the CPSU leadership has for the last decade and a half faced a national and ethnic challenge of grave and growing proportions." [Ref. 1: p. 1] He further argues that Soviet success in managing its multinational state is reflected primarily in its having so far prevented a successful secessionary move, violent or otherwise, on the part of any of its constituent republics. This measure of the



successful management of a multi-ethnic federation, however, should not prematurely be regarded as a solution, because it sidesteps the question of whether the Soviet leadership will be able to deal successfully with the tensions that are at the root of the problem. [Ref. 1: pp. 2-3]

Nationalism of many Soviet minorities is aimed at the preservation of their cultures, and specifically against being assimilated or Russified. "The issue has been less one of the territorial extent and form of Soviet government, than of specific regime policies in the cultural sphere and in the selection, promotion and distribution of elites." [Ref. 1: p. 7] Noting that the USSR espouses national independence for Third World states, and that the Eastern European empire has at least formal sovereignty, some nationalists may well ask, if them, why not my republic?

Crisostomo reports that since the 1950's the Soviets have used their own Muslims "extensively to further cultural, economic and diplomatic relations with third world countries, particularly those with large Muslim populations." [Ref. 37: p. 330] Muslims, well screened for loyalty to the regime, make up a large percentage of the staff in Soviet embassies and diplomatic missions in various Islamic countries. [Ref. 37: p. 330] She further explains that "Soviet leaders often extol the relatively rapid social and economic development of Soviet Muslim republics and promote them as models for third world development." [Ref. 37: p. 330]



Various information and exchange programs aimed at the Middle East are very "Turkocentric". According to Azrael, these programs have a "strong emphasis on the vitality and richness of Soviet Muslims political, economic and cultural life and on the 'lessons' that other Muslims can draw from the Soviet Turkic experience." [Ref. 40: p. 147]

The Soviets attempt to cultivate the foreign kinsmen of most of their own nationalities. Their primary goals seem to be to mitigate any militancy that these people may use in lobbying for their relatives in the USSR, to reduce anti-Soviet sentiments and to better trade relations with these people's new countries. The various nationalities of the USSR serve as tools in the varied panoply of Soviet foreign policy.

Yet, despite the Soviet quest for international influence, by most accounts it has not been dramatically successful. While some countries have welcomed Soviet assistance, and are impressed by what the Soviet Union has been able to accomplish, "most third world countries remain wary of Soviet motives, and few have adopted the Soviet economic development model." [Ref. 37: p. 340]

Another aspect of the exportation of the Soviet nationality ideology is the highlighting of internal and external Soviet views of both Islam and nationalist movements.





Externally, the Soviet leadership touts the religious freedom of its Muslims, supports various national liberation movements in developing countries, and maintains that Islam and communism can find common ground. Internally, Soviet officials condemn religious practice, try to diffuse nationalist tendencies of the Muslim population, and play down the religious aspects of external events like the Iranian revolution. Because of this paradoxical behavior, Soviet leaders risk intensifying the national consciousness of their own Muslim people. [Ref. 37: p. 340]

Finally, following the line of thought of the above quotation, Neil Hyams discussed the Soviet manner of encouraging selected nationalisms for foreign policy reasons, but notes that this "must seem particularly cynical to many non-Russians." [Ref. 41: p. 197]

#### F. DISCUSSION

Current Soviet foreign policy is pragmatic, survival-oriented and not easily influenced by domestic issues. Neither internal nor external pressures arising from Soviet ethnic and national problems are likely to precipitate major changes in Soviet foreign policy. However, as Crisostomo comments, ethnic and demographic problems "will continue to exacerbate other problems the Soviet leadership faces, especially in its attempts to gain influence in the third world." [Ref. 37: p. 340] Further, over the long range, any lessening of efficiency of the Soviet military may cause some impact on the implementation of Soviet foreign policy. Another aspect of problems caused by Soviet demographic and ethnic difficulties is that they may withdraw vital resources or divert attention from





established policy goals in political attempts to placate, resolve or repress nationality problems. Underlying all is the realization that the language of Soviet foreign policy is not necessarily the reality. What they say may not be what they are actually doing.



## VI. CONCLUSIONS

This thesis examined Soviet ethnic and national problems resulting from the gradual demographic shifts presently underway. It has considered the impact of the shift from a Russian majority in a Russian dominated society, to the Russians becoming only one large minority group among many. As demographic trends take several generations to achieve significant results, the change in the Soviet ethnic balance will be a gradual process, so care must be taken not to exaggerate its pace or effects. This aside, the tensions that will increasingly strain the Soviet system as a result of the demographic changes present complex problems with which the new Kremlin leadership must deal.

Soviet leaders appear stymied. They are unsure of how to deal with such a potentially explosive problem. The Soviet tendency to manage rather than resolve problems will only worsen the long term effect. Further complicating any solution is the dilemma of solving a problem which officially does not exist. Azrael concludes that Brezhnev's claim that the "historical nationality problem" had definitely been solved was "certainly premature and may turn out to have been rashly overconfident." [Ref. 40: p. 139]

As the weight of the population shifts, so does the potential for power. After six decades of Communist rule, the ethnic minorities of the Soviet Union are operating from



a stronger position, especially in terms of modernization. Many groups are educated, some are urban and all are increasingly politically mobile. While no single factor can explain Soviet foreign policy, ethnic or national input will probably have increasing impact through domestic constraints on foreign policy.

The Soviet Union, despite its awesome military power, is attempting to both deal with and channel nationalistic forces. Meyer concludes that the Soviets "are attempting to survive an era of intense nationalism with an empire whose roots lie deep in the nineteenth century." [Ref. 5: p. 166] Could it be that today there is yet another sweeping historical movement, similar to those preceeding the revolutions of 1848? Perhaps the rise in Soviet nationalism has its roots not only in history, ethnicity and demographic changes, but in an ethnonational movement such as that suggested by Croan. The Russian goal of building the Soviet Man has so far failed. Possibly by emphasizing national differences, the Soviets unknowingly triggered somewhat dormant nationalism.

As Wesson wrote some years ago, the national problem "is held no problem in the Soviet Union; the most forbidden of all subjects is that of the real relation between nationalities." [Ref. 2: p. 431] This creates a source of weakness, but the seriousness of the issue is unknown. A November 1968 quote from an article in "Pravda" may give a



clue to Soviet concern. "The national question is one of the most complicated and acute questions of social development. It has taken on special acuteness in the contemporary era, the era of struggle of socialism and capitalism..." [Ref. 2: p. 433]

Key to the issue of nationalism is that the various  
[ "Communist regimes have failed to alter the subjective orientation of minority nationalities they rule; inequalities among ethnic or linguistic groups remain politically volatile less because of what people have than because of how they feel as citizens of a particular Communist party state dominated by another nationality." ]  
[Ref. 42: p. 273] These inequalities remain important. A Polish sociologist wrote that the party cannot disassociate itself from any social strains caused by inequalities in the system. She notes that, in the final analysis, "it all comes down to the question (of) the legitimacy of the existing system." [Ref. 42: p. 275] This is further expanded when she comments that

With a centralized system of decision-making and supervision of (policy execution)...any , even small, deterioration of living standards brings into sharp relief the problem of methods of leader recruitment. Doubt is cast on the leaders' legitimacy and the question is revived as to whose interests are really represented by people in authority. [Ref. 42: p. 275]

This may be made even more difficult as the demographic changes become more apparent. [ The Russian power elite will be forced either to share some of that power in the future,





or to become even more elitist and somehow find the power to maintain that status. ] The internal pressures and problems could strengthen the Soviet regime's determination to retain its East European empire; thus, they will be more likely to crack down on any East European deviations, and any overflow into Soviet dominions.

In the long run, perhaps the only way the USSR can maintain its current growth rates, standard of living and dominance of the military/industrial complex is by increasing the already substantial technology transfers from the West. Importing foreign workers may also help alleviate the trained, urban labor shortfalls. Both of these fixes have the potential for dramatic impact on Soviet foreign policy, and could also further constrain the Soviet economy. Yet even with this, Soviet industrial growth could decline. The regime could find it difficult to satisfy both their military/industrial complex, their goals of international power and recognition, and the rising expectations of their people. The declining fertility for much of the Soviet Union implies minimal population growth while Soviet planners have counted on long-run moderate increases. With the marked regional differences, attention is bound to be accorded to these disparities in attempts to either restrain or encourage fertility.

If pressures on the Soviet system become intense enough, they could seek an outlet to divert their peoples'



attention. Azrael concludes that the regime may be tempted to dissipate pressures "by initiating political-military confrontations of a sort that could activate an otherwise recessive or inoperative Soviet patriotism." [Ref. 20: p. 380] By creating a devil to divert the people some time may be bought.

As noted, foreign policy is probably somewhat remote from direct influence by most members of the Soviet population. Yet foreign policy is tempered and somewhat constrained by Soviet ethnic problems. Their short term effects seem to have little impact on Soviet foreign policy and on forecasts for the future. For the Soviet Union, a major problem of the coming decades will be how their leadership attempts to solve, or at least adapt to Soviet demographic changes. They must either reconcile the various nationalities and bring them into more active participation in the Soviet system, or repress their nationalistic endeavors. Either of these will have some impact on the basic integrity of the Soviet system, and will certainly affect the conduct of Soviet foreign policy. The nationality problem may not be intrinsically momentous, but it is crucial for its potentially exacerbating effects on Soviet foreign policy. If the Soviets are forced to deal with their nationality problems, the resolution, or even makeshift solutions, may withdraw vital resources from other



sectors of the country or divert political attention from the foreign policy goals of the USSR.]



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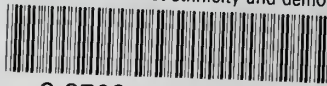
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